



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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***GOVERNOR AFFIRMS STATES' PRIMARY ROLE
IN DISASTER RESPONSE***

Napolitano testifies before the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Governor Janet Napolitano today told the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security that states, not the federal government, should lead emergency response efforts. She emphasized that the federal government must act as a better partner with states in preventing and preparing for emergencies and disasters.

“While the federal government is often a critical partner in emergency response and disaster relief, it is the states that have historically responded well,” Governor Napolitano said. “State and local governments are in the best position to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergency and disaster.”

The Governor discussed Arizona’s success in coordinating local, state and federal efforts during the state’s wildfire and flashflood seasons. Through each man-made or natural disaster, Arizona has made improvements such as developing evacuation plans and improving communications between the different emergency crews working the disaster, she said.

Napolitano described the federal response to Hurricane Katrina as “delayed and disorganized,” and encouraged joint planning between states and the federal government before an actual disaster occurs. “The best disaster response actually happens years before a first responder ever arrives on the scene,” she said.

Governor Napolitano said the federal government is not meeting its responsibility of working with state to prevent disasters, and said she was frustrated Congress cut Arizona’s homeland security resources by 30 percent.

The Governor also called on Congress to prevent a potential disaster by securing the Arizona-Mexico international border. “Securing the international border is a federal responsibility, but time and time again the federal government has refused to provide the proper resources – and enough Border Patrol agents – to secure it,” she said.

A copy of the Governor’s testimony is attached.